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S E R M O N

Preached to the
S O C I E T I E S
F O R
Reformation of Manners,

At *St. Mary Le Bow,*

On *Monday, December the Twenty Ninth,*
M D C C X I I. *K*

By *JOHN GASKARTH, D.D. Vicar of*
All-hallows-Barking, London.

Published at their Request.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Richard Wilkin, at the King's-Head in*
St. Paul's-Church-Yard. 1713.

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THE P R E F A C E.

IT has been requested and thought fit, that the following Pages should not go abroad, without something of Preface or Incitement to better disposea People, who observe the Gospel-Law from a filial Fear or Love of God; that, in the same Christian Spirit, which so obliges us to promote the Benefit of our Brethren, with no less Instance, than where Self is concerned, they would apply their best Endeavours, to recover and bring disorderly Persons, when the Inducements of Religion and gentle Admonitions cannot have their Effect, to a Sense of their Duty and moral Behaviour, as enforced by civil Sanctions, and according to the Methods which those prescribe.

And this cannot be looked on, as an hopeless Process, which so often has well succeeded, and with the Contrition of the Offenders so obtained, has had the return of their Thanks for it; but rather, tho' even such, to be Love advanced (other Means failing) beyond which it has no Means farther for the awakening of Minds under the Lethargy of Sin, regardless of, or Proof against, the Terrors of another World; viz. to engage and try the last Experiment, where 'tis so extorted from every good Man, on impudent Swearers, prophane Sabbath-Breakers, Drunkards, and the like.—

And indeed otherwise the best advised Laws, for the Security of Religion, would be insignificant, a mis spent time of the Legislators, and no more. For the Magistrate having no larger Views than other Men, if he be not acquainted with Misdemeanours, how can such possibly have their repulse,

or

The P R E F A C E.

or be restrained? Must not then, in our present Degeneracy, Vice, having got so much ground, still go on to all its Ex-

Legum ministri, magistratus; Legum interpretes, Judices; Legum deniq; idcirco omnes servi sumus, ut Liberi esse possimus. Cicero pro Cluentio.

cesses? A learned and wise Hea-then will tell us, which may more influence in the Case, that on the Account of the common Advantage, so secured and redounding thence, every one is bound to serve the De-
sign and Intent of the Laws. And,

as those Laws that are of humane Appointment, in a right Definition and Matter, are not differing from Divine, with respect to the Letter, only these enacted over again, for their farther Efficacy, with the Addition of Temporal Punishments on the Transgressors, 'tis plain Consequence, where such an Agreement is, that those Persons, who will not appear in Support of the former (the Authority deriv'd from God, so us'd in its due regard to him) must be answerable for suffering the other, those of his own immediate Institution, to be contemned and trampled upon also; besides the Aggravation of their want of Charity and due Concern for the Souls of Men. Who then, considering as he ought, whether on the Account of Censure or Shame, or any thing else, can refuse to perform that, ever with Discretion, ever with the Pity that Charity inspires, the Neglect whereof is such a Publick Detriment, and which therefore is such a commendable Instance, and so highly needful to be discharged by some.

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GAL. IV. 18.

But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.

THESE Words immediately refer to the Apostle, the inspired Author, or the holy Spirit's Amanuensis of this Epistle, considered with some false Teachers, whom we may suppose either Jews born, or formerly Profelytes to that Religion, crept in amongst these *Galatians*, inconsistently maintaining, That Circumcision, and certain other Legal Ceremonies, must still be observed in the Profession of, and together with, the Christian Faith and Doctrines; which he, the Apostle, calls *perverting the Gospel*, as writing to the *Corinthians* on the same Occasion, a *corrupting its Simplicity*, 2 Epist. 11. 4. which purely regards the inward State or Habit of the Mind, *Holiness there*; and stands discharged of those burdensom outward Things, that only had their Account or Value, as they were subservient to the promoting of *that* within. And so vehement is he, in his dissuading from those old Usages, that he even anathematizes an Angel, if he should preach them after his coming, whose but Types they were, and under the Gospel-Dispensation. Now, tho' these *Galatians*, being of this our Apostle's Conversion, He, as he speaks (1 Epist. 4. 15.) to those *Corinthians* again, their Father, were at first exceedingly inamoured of him, and towards him, receiv'd him as *an Angel of God, even as Christ Jesus himself*, and would have parted with the dearest Things they had, with their *very Eyes*, if possible, and *have given them him*; yet these Seducers so far prevailed upon them, by their specious Arguments, and lessening his Authority, comparatively to the other Apostles, as he had never seen our Saviour in the Flesh; and by their insinuating Carriage, pretending such abundant Love for them, which is so inveigling, the more to engage theirs back again, and which too much had its Effect, that they had mainly drawn them off, first from their

Gospel-Liberty, as to such external Rites, where the Heart is not so concern'd, and then from him. But he tells them, this is all Delusion and Artifice, such the Arguments, such the Behaviour of those Teachers, and that their *sincere Affection to him* their Apostle, the Means and Instrument our Saviour used to bring them into a State of Salvation, if they renounc'd and rejected is not; *this*, as he so deserved from them, was their bounden and commendable Part, the good Thing they were to answer towards him, and that always in his Absence, as well as when he was present with them.

Now, altho' this be the Scope of the Text in its Coherence, which I thought I was first to set forth; yet the Phrase being compleat by it self, and universal, I question not but it may be so accepted for the Subject of the ensuing Discourse. For I cannot but own St. *Augustine's* Opinion, speaking somewhere to this Purpose, That every Sense of Scripture, according to the common use of Words, where an entire Sentence is allow'd, without transposing or changing Periods to the depraving of the rest, what preceeds or follows; every such Sense, importing a wholsom Lesson or Doctrine, for the better and more pious Conduct of Life, and so accommodable to the whole Design of the Scriptures, may be reckon'd as contain'd therein. For this is the Preheminence of the Scripture, compar'd with other Books, such a copious Treasure is it of the deepest and most concerning Knowledge, as given forth and dictated by him, who discerns Truth in all its Amplitude and Relations, that, as it carries almost every where a spiritual Meaning under the Letter, according to the Correspondence of the two Worlds to one another, the Original and the Copy; so each of these Meanings may well be thought to be often in several respects, or in more than one; tho' what is most obvious, lying open to the meanest honest Understanding, for whose Benefit the Scriptures were especially design'd, who will thankfully receive them as they are, who will have no Mind, who have no Inducement, to wrest or pervert them, which is only the Refuge of an obstinate Course of Sin, the most obvious Meaning is never to be rejected. Thus then a general Acceptation of the Words of the Text, tho' used and standing in a particular Reference, may have the Authority of the holy Spirit nevertheless for it.

Taking then *zealously affected* on a proper and good Ground, for a right Zeal in the Abstract, this shall be my Subject, and on this, as enabled and assisted by God's good Spirit, who is our true Light and Understanding, in whatever Measures he pleases to vouchsafe himself, I shall endeavour these Things,

First, To explain and define a religious Zeal, what it is, and whence it derives and has its Vigour.

2dly, Set forth how strenuously it acts or exerts it self on every Occasion, but still under the Guidance of, and with Prudence, its Associate: As,

3dly, The Success it commonly has, and must have.

4thly, That this lyes as an Obligation on all, to be possess'd of or armed with, and so to be exerted, in their several Spheres.

5thly, That this, as attained and practis'd, affords, and is the true Test to our selves, as well as to others, of our State and Progress in Religion, whether less or more.

6thly, I shall add some farther Enforcements to this Duty, with the Advantages we have thereto.

And before I enter on these Particulars, to comprehend the Text in every Part, let me set down briefly as a Preface, that the endeavouring the Reformation of Mankind, to recover them to their true *Nature and Happiness*, the distinguishing Preheminence they stand in, and were created with, from their sensual and evil Courses, which deprive them of both; and where they have so deviated, as the alone Means of such their Recovery, bring them back and restore them to a Gospel-Conversation; or if this cannot be obtained, on habituated and harden'd Offenders themselves, the putting an Obstacle in the way of Sin, and hindring its Infection and spreading on others, that this, I suppose, uncontestedly, is a good Thing, to which we should be zealously affected, or that 'tis a proper Subject of our Zeal, and therefore, on so allowed a Principle, I shall not enlarge; the mentioning of it is sufficient, which nevertheless was requisite too.

First, Then to explain and define a religious Zeal, what it is, and whence it derives and has its Vigour. — And this is a compound Passion or Affection, of Love, as now considered with Reference to its highest Object, God, and Indignation, against any of his reasonable Creatures, that cast off his Authority, the awful Reverence, ever the Tribute of the

holy Angels, the just Subjection that his Sovereign being Challenges or Claims, that his Benefits and their most Indispensable Gratitude, which should ever run Parallel or be answerable thereto, requires from them; when they even disown his Divine Perfections, the Acknowledgment of which, to its being real and where it truly is, must be Practical, and engage our Endeavours to the reforming our natures after them, to transcribe them into the Temper and Habit of our Minds, and Indignation against any of our Brethren, that are so guilty towards God that cast off all due regards to him, and thoughts of him, in a bold impious Libertine behaviour of any sort, and blaspheme and dishonour his most holy Name. A religious Zeal is this so consisting of Love and Indignation; So these both in its double efforts towards God and Man, and just alike prevailing and Strong, the one as the other, the one way and the other. The latter receives its Strength from the former, and is in the same Proportion or Degree. If our Hearts be wholly fixed on God, our Love, First in and thro' the Divine drawing, but with which we freely conforming, be so carried forth and entire to him, all other Desires if not extinguished, at least subjected and under this, then God assumes this our Love into his, and as so united brings it back with his, to the alone Object thereof, to himself in his Son, in whom all his delights are. —

And that this is a right stating and Account, that our Love of God is advanced by this means, viz. of our faithfulness to, or compliance with, his First attractings, and this our part discharged after some manner, then even his answerably infused thereinto. I think is expressly told us by the Apostle concerning the *Colossians*, (*Chap* 1. 8) where with such Exultation and Thanksgiving to God he makes mention of their *Love in the Spirit*, whereof he was acquainted from *Epaphras*. And again referring it generally to all Christians, (*Rom.* 5. 5.) *The Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the holy Ghost*. And indeed if it were not so, viz. God's gracious and mighty influencing, the beginning, the end, as we are so sunk into sensible things, we could never Love him at all, much less in due aspirings, and the measure we should. And this is the very same, as to all and every vertue, which is only on our side an honest Surrender or conforming of our Wills to or with the Grace that Prevents us, and then thro' such our free motion so excited also, the Effect, the Performance of Grace too. As the sted-

dy preserving of our Wills in such conformity, such a right bent or direction of our Liberty continued and maintained, is that which constitutes the vertuous Habit. Thus our Love of God, when kindled by his and ascending with his, and so becoming a just Flame, or true Zeal, all its force and fervour must be from him; our Indignation then at any wicked Instance, any direct Impeachment of him in the Oeconomy of his Grace, or the ways of his Providence; any denying him what he is, what he has declared himself to be, in his highest perfections or mysterious nature; any daring Violation of his Laws he has given us, our Indignation at all such will be still answering, his tremendous name and Honour duly vindicated, even in truth by himself actuating our Spirits and invigorating their native tendency to him.

Let us now observe in the Second Place, when our Love of God has attained such predominancy, or his Love is so received into ours, and operative in it, so both together, so become one, such a true and fervent Zeal, how it will exert itself on every occasion, and be sure, where God is so in the Instance, with Prudence and with Temper, with Moderation, unless towards him, there we must believe, if we unhappily want the Experience, it flies up like as on *Clyab's* Fiery Chariot, more Swift and more Pure. In its double Process as it relates to God and Man, as it is a Love first respecting God, and then descending from him on his Image, it freely reprehends all abuses of an infinite bounty and forbearance too, for our bethinking ourselves, for our discerning, and so renouncing our follies, for our better Behaviour at last; every Trespass it meets with, every Impudent Affront, more wicked or more Foolish, even of Omnipotence, hitherto expressed in Goodness only; but which can and will put forth other Effects, where Sin remains unsatisfy'd for, unrepented of, then it will be turned into fierce wrath, its Fire Love changed into that, its Burning that; I say such a Love of Zeal with regard to the honour of God, and the highest benefit, or Salvation of Men freely reproves all Sin and Vice, and often even with Anger; for Anger, on this Account, is the product of Love, as terminated on the Sin, and more because of the Concern for the Person, but still without violent Insults and Disorder; ever with Gentleness, which is another off-spring of Love, especially as transplanted from the legal Oeconomy into this of
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the Gospel, and putting on its renewed Spirit or Temper. Those so transported Instances of Old, which were certainly more than the Instinct of natural Temper, Divine Impulses in the first Examples, *viz.* Phineas, Jethu, as we find these both justify'd, tho' both expressed in Murder, by the rewards entail'd upon them; but which were followed into so much fury and Confusion afterwards; these, even on the score of the highest Impieties, are not to be admitted, if they could with regard to our Civil Constitution, where the occasion is so fully prevented, under our dispensation, nor even the inward emotion neither, which, besides its contrariety to the Spirit we should be of, where 'tis allowed to the conception, will often force its Birth. Our Saviour has given us another Pattern, as often stiled the *Lamb of God*, in his meek Disposition, in his Behaviour inform'd thence.

To consider this his Pattern in our Present Particular only, the Subject we are now upon. With what mildness do's he always reprove, never turning his Instructions at the same time into upbraiding, never aggravating the Guilt beyond the necessity of what was to remove it, *viz.* Repentance, where he saw a Preparedness towards that. Indeed he urged his Reprehensions very severely on the Pharisees, with anger as 'tis said, (*Mark 3. 5.*) giving their outside Piety and Formality, it's deserved stile, and for the Envy, the Venom they harboured within, often calling them Vipers, as for another as ill an Inmate separate from Innocency, *Herod a Fox*. So may Men Brutalize their noble Image, and change their Nature into that of Beasts, what will become of them dying such, we leave to God, however we may observe as to our Saviour, Love ever had the ascendancy in all this. We read indeed of one Transport of his, and special Manifestation of his Divinity too, when with a Scourge of small Cords he drove forth of the Temple, such a multitude, as we cannot but suppose, upon the occasion of their resort there, of Prophaners of it; but we who cannot look into the Hearts must not pretend to imitate our Saviour in the first kinds, so as to pass an absolute censure of the inward State of any, of the greatest offenders; and the other Instance must be left to his Deity, to Purge his Temple; not only materially speaking; but even the Souls and Spirits of Men from all Prophaneness, all Hypocrisy, all vain Contests, all Envy and Strife, bequeathing and blessing them

them with his Peace and Love, when he pleases, and may he soon repeat the Miracle. What we are to Learn from him, and to practise on these Accounts, is the manner and method of these Reprehensions, so tinged with Love, so Proceeding thence, so Gentle, so Compassionate, that answering his Character in the Prophet, (*Isa. II. 41.*) we *reprove with Equity*, so as that may have the most avail by soft Insinuation to promote and engage Conversion and Amendment, that what is so much our bounden Duty, where we observe our Brethren to offend in any Respect, we ever admonish them. Not perhaps, such may possibly the Case be without some effort of Passion neither; but besure to afford the Evidence withal, that the Passion is the genuine result of Love, of that Spring and Causality.

And this way is the likeliest to impress upon them, or rather to sink into them, while they stand so sedate, and work first a sense of their Follies in them; and then, what one would think should rationally follow a purpose of forsaking them, and commencing a new tenor of Life. Whereas if we pursue them with insulting Terms tho' never so Just, or with too much Heat, we only put them upon an obstinate Defence of what they would otherwise fairly Yield, and stir up and raise an ill Spirit between us, with which we shall both be equally acted, and instead of rescuing them, become captivated in the Evil our selves. We read, and which well may be applied to this Purpose, that *Michael contending with the Devil about the Body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing Accusation*. What should be the Reason of this? The Devil besure deserved the worst that could be said of him, whatever it was he must stand Guilty, his Malice could not be expressed too high or in terms exceeding it, that even *Michael* could not do; and besides, *he* was the chief of the Angelical Thrones, and far more Potent than the other. But his might was in God, and in *Communion* with him; he owed all to *this*, thro' his Humility he was so great, and he stood in the Meekness and Serene Peace. If the Devil could have removed him thence, interrupted that Habit, and drawn him into any undue Transport, he would then have had the Conquest; even the highest Prince *Michael* would have been brought down into the Element where the Devil has the Rule, and who would then have been the Stronger. This

I produce to enforce the caution of Preserving our selves while we admonish and reprove others.

Let us now in the *Third Place* see the Success this may probably have; *viz.* when a pure right Zeal, a fervour enkindled from the Love of God, so burning up towards him, so breaking forth into Indignation against any thing that offends him, or is repugnant to him. When this exerts it self in Admonitions or Reproofs of any of our Brethren, any way relieving them, and stopping their hastned Course to ruin, while done also in Demonstration of Love to such our Brethren, and with Meekness, what Success it may probably have. And 'tis very obvious to infer on several Accounts, generally speaking, how prevailing this must be. For if we consider humane Nature, even notwithstanding its present Depravity and Proneness to comply with its worse Parts, how pliable it is to proper Advices, when gently treated, when address'd under an appearance or semblance of Love, the incomppliance and obstinacy that seems so much in it, being mostly owing to the rude Attacques upon it, to the Frauds it meets with more than what is implied in its Constitution, or which that even now is. Again, that the Faculties of our Minds, have still the Predominancy in some Measure, and give their Verdict at least against the shameful Pursuit of our sensual Appetites, and can countermand the outward Act; This we may observe whether where Penalty or Shame intervenes. And again that few have quite sinned away Grace, and become wholly impenetrable to its Workings, so that this is repulsed back to its Fountain, or lest it should be farther profaned, or impiety more aggravated by the Resistance, with the answerable Punishment treasured up, withdrawn from them, I hope but few such. Seeing then Mankind for the most stand thus, our brotherly Corrections may not seem desperate, when rightly applied, and our Zeal, what this is, our Love of God and of them in its due Fervour; with the farther Incitement from our hatred of Sin, our Zeal may not so often be defeated, or without the happy Event. *Solomon* tells us, *a soft Tongue breaketh the Bone.* *Pro. 25. 15.* Corrosives so administred, of which Nature Correction is, may nevertheless mollifie the most callous Temper. For whatever Arguments or Dissuasives from Sin we offer to any, we have *their Reason* on our side and against themselves

selves, and perhaps *this* was laid asleep among sensual Care-
 ses, and wanted but awakning and rousing up to come to
 Reflection and its Government again. But especially this may
 add Confidence to us, that such our greatest Benefactions,
 our endeavours of Love, working or striking on their Minds
 outwardly; and as the influencings of the Holy Spirit with-
 in are seldom wholly stifled, meeting these, the one with the
 other, the one exciting the other, both together may well
 nigh ascertain and secure the Effect, can even scarce be resi-
 sted not at least without great Violence. For so God has
 settled both the Administration of his Grace and Providence
 in such our Dependence on one another, to convince us of our
 being but one Body in Christ, we but Parts of a whole; that
 by and with our Performance first, some instance of Affe-
 ction shown to our Brethren, and upon them, he acts and
 operates, and confers his Blessings of every Kind. So we are
 obliged to pray for one another, and by that Act of ours,
 obtain divine Grace on one another, a more enlarged Mea-
 sure, and on our selves too, than would have been without
 that charitable Discharge on our Part. And this excellently
 serves to the increase of our Love, and our firmer Cement
 and Union together, that we may be more conjoyned in Heart
 and Will; as we are all Members of one Head our Blessed
 Redeemer, and receive what we have, or will have, of Spi-
 ritual Life from him.

Now as Grace both incites to the vertuous Instance,
 and then more freely flows forth therewith to the perfect
 Habit, there being such harmonizing on God's Part, of his
 special Effects and Workings with our Charity, with what-
 ever we perform thence from that Instinct or Principle, we
 often see God triumphantly concurring in our more embold-
 ned repulses of Vice and Reprimands upon it, how he strikes
 down the impious Offender, how, he it must be, Subjects
 him under us, who, if there were nothing but humane in the
 Contest, would certainly insult us for our Ungenteelness,
 for our Rudeness in the World's Notion. God often van-
 quishes the Devil before us in such charitable Attempts,
 chains up both his Might and his Malice for that time, to
 convince the poor Vassal, that there is a prevailing Aid for
 his Rescue, if he be but willing to quit his Lusts, and his
 Tyrant, and joyn therewith. The Devil indeed is thus often

overcome, but alas not so dispossest'd, none can do this for another, their own intense Co-operation, strong Resolution, and Combate and Conflict, in a long Process carried on, must be the Means of, and engaged to this effect.

And for present Conquests on the worst of People, and to encourage our strenuous opposing such in their wicked Courses, and reprovng and representing those what they are, with the good Consequence this may have, we read in the Scriptures, whence we may best, and ought on all Accounts to found our Behaviour, and fetch Examples, *viz.* what was done by *Nathan*, *Elijah* even on an *Abah*, not to mention the other Prophets, the holy Apostles, and many besides. But some may think to evade the Instances in this respect, by alledging these were Prophets, and specially sent with these Messages, and assisted for the Discharge: But, in Truth, all Men are sent with such, or on this Errand, as I shall set forth afterwards; and as to the Assistance in it, I have obviated before. A Prophet, because of a more general Defection, had divine Orders and Revelations given him, to pull down and destroy, to build up and to plant, *viz.* Sin and Vertue in the one respect and the other, and by declaring impending Judgments to enforce Repentance the more. This Part we all know, that Judgments belong to an impenitent Course, that they naturally result from it, that they are bred and born in it, and would immediately fall upon it, there needs no inflicting, unless divine Mercy hinder'd the Process, and broke the Fatality, and kept them off. *This* is the positive Act. And to argue that none else are oblig'd to these Instances of withstanding Sin, of Reproofs, and the like, one may as well maintain that Charity is not universally a Duty, or incumbent on all. A Prophet was little better furnished on this Account, than any besides, since we have the Advantage of the inspired Writings. He was distinguish'd, indeed, from other People, and for their Benefit, by Visions and Predictions, display'd, as it were, on the Surface of his Mind; but others, with respect to the Centre, and what passes there, might as deeply be possessed of the Habits of Religion, as he, to whom nevertheless God did not vouchsafe, where the Reason might not be, such Notices or Views. Thus we may observe the prevalency or success, that seasonable interposing and restraints upon Sin, under proper Qualifications, may probably have, if not al-

ways,

ways, yet not so seldom, that we should think our selves dispensed with at any time to intermit them.

And, which is the 4th Particular, this lays an Obligation on all, to be possessed of such Zeal; to be armed with it, and which to be exerted in their several Spheres, the Demonstration of which is evident. If it be our Obligation to love God, our Creator, our Redeemer, the sanctifying Spirit proceeding from both, the most one complete undivided Being, in three distinct Subsistences, who every one, not only with regard to our first Existence, the *great Endowments bestowed upon us, the high Resemblance, the fair Copy of the Deity we then were*; but when we had cast off and defaced *these*, had also a several Part in our Redemption, or the recovering us to *these* again. If it be our Duty to love God, (which after the recital before, I think needs no Proof) and his so impair'd Image Man, then be sure so inhaunced this Love, what it should be, in its utmost Effort, we must by all proper Methods we are capable of, vindicate any Indignities offered him, and astonishing it is, from a Worm, from a Nothing in it self, produc'd and sustain'd in him and by him, that has nought but his turned against him; every presumptuous Behaviour towards him, every Trespas on his Laws and Sovereignty, every bold Treatment of his blessed Name, and in a most hearty Derestation thereof, as Compassion for the poor guilty Souls, both rescue them, if possible, and put a stop to the abominable Evil, with the eternal Torments and Misery that inseparably attend it, where the Application of Christ's Blood does not intervene, where a true Repentance, thro' his Grace and Merits, does not break the Chain.

We, I mean, every one stand obliged to discharge this Love of God, this Charity to our Brethren, which is even the highest Instance thereof, as the Benefit relates to their noblest Part, and which every one can discharge some way, *viz.* bestow a wholsom Counsell upon them, where, whether it be a single act of Sin with its deadly Influence nevertheless, so tending to impair the Modesty of their Minds, so ever debilitating the restraints within; or even a formed Habit of such, endeavour at least by this Means, gentle Admonitions, if we be possessed of no other, to hinder the Commission, or suppress the ill Practice for the time to come, and intercept their Career to endless Ruine, this Charity claims of us. And indeed the Charity goes farther, and therefore the Claim is stronger up-

on us, as Sin is so Infectious, and has all the Rhetorick of corrupt Nature, Fancy and all on its Side, viz: to stop it in its first Irruption, which might otherwise so propagate the Plague-fore. Every one stands thus obliged according to the Measure of the Talent he's entrusted with, and mostly to this Purpose in the Sphere he is.

This lies more distinguishly on the Clergy, 'tis their special Business they are called, and they dedicate themselves thereto, and so more aggravated Woes attend them, if they answer it not in their constant Pious Admonitions and Doctrine as Occasion offers, in the more religious Tenour of their Lives; with Gravity always, so engaging Seriousness for the advantage of Edifying, so checking every thing Indecent or Disorderly; and to evince their Self-denial, what it is within, restraining themselves from all Instances, which common Opinion charges with Levity, or which are not so removed, as the Pattern they should be, from the confines of Sin, and perhaps too alluring Inducements to it.

And *Magistrates* also of what order soever Higher or Lower, who according to God's especial Appointment, and with his Delegation, have such a Superiority of Station and Power invested in them, to this very end for the coercing of notorious Wickedness, when private Admonitions loose their Effect, by open and personal Corrections and Punishments; which may happily conquer an inveterate Obduracy, and obtain what the other could not. *These*, if they neglect such their solemn Part in redressing the Disorders and the Miseries of Mankind; and thro' their Supineness, assuming the Honour but not the Office, or thro' their own Vices, which must hinder their Inflicting, what is due thereto, on others: If *these*, so betraying their high Charge suffer Sin with its usual Fertility, like the worst of Herbs, to grow up and spread it self uncontrouled; their Case must be intolerable, when our great Redeemer comes to sit on his universal Tribunal, and return every Man his Works upon him; that with their Authority they have not mended the World, but permitted it to go on according to its Genius, still to a more wicked and wretched State: And not to lay this on some to the indemnifying of others, this dreadful Remark concerns all People less or more.

Indeed

Indeed one would wonder, it is so contradictions, such a desperate hardness, as to those acquainted with the *Precepts* of Religion, even carried up to the example in God, and with his Sanction upon them; not only that some should sink into quite contrary courses, and withal so derogatory to the high excellency of their own being, but that any can see such Courses and Practices without the utmost concern to apply the remedy that possibly is on their Part. Can one see a Drunkard, First Guilty beyond the Beasts as to the means, and as then so having changed his differencing intellect from them into a degree below their Instincts; or a Sabbath-Breaker as Sottish in his right Senses, not owning any Dependence on God or Homage to him; or an Impudent and Prophane Swearer, sporting with the Infinite Majesty of Heaven, and daring his Vengeance, even by Unaccountable Execrations on himself; or an Animal of the lewd Tribe, whethersoever sex it be immersed in sensuality, and bound with the Strongest Bands thereof, which indeed has its Punishment more immediately following, but seldom sanative of the mind; can one see these Deplorable Wretches, any of them, and not be struck with Horror first, and then Commiseration and a forcible impulse to do whatever we are able to bring them again into the Humane Creation, and recover them to a sense of God and themselves? Doubtless even the Heathen Morality, much more the noble Gospel Scheme, I say the Heathen Morality, more the *Dictate of Nature*, as disciplined by uncertain Philosophy sometimes hitting on truth, sometimes widely missing it, more *such*, than the effect of Grace or a light thence, as not being attained in reliance thereon or the faith thereof, this would engage one against such Impieties, and to Redress them, if one any ways could; and one may conclude, if we find no emotions in our Spirits on these occasions, and to this Purpose, that our Christianity stands short of that, and of the Examples which thence may be Produced.

For in the *Fifth* Place this as attained and Practised, this stemming and stopping the torrent of Vice, as our disposedness is thereto, is the test to our selves as well, as to others, of our State and Progress in Religion, less or more. Charity in its full Comprehension and Latitude, the Love of God and our Neighbour is both the ground, and the whole of Religion, every several Duty, we are to express, centers there and derives

gives thence. And as Love is an inward fervour, of the nature of Fire, with its Light too, it must needs, even with regard to such its double Activity, manifest it self in proper Instances, according to the Measure that is in the Heart, or a Principle there, if it be there at all. If therefore that be our sad Experience, a numbness in our Spirits with respect to the cause of Religion, and its support, no Vigour but about some outside Disputes that enter not the Soul, but nevertheless convincingly tend to its farther depraving; no stirring of Zeal for what is spiritual and inward, a Life within, *viz. Vertue and Holiness*, and the maintaining and propagating of *these*; no promptness for retrieving the Honour of God, with the awful and just Sentiments of him upon the Minds, and influencing the Practice of Mankind, so in consequence to, so the only Means of their true Happiness, both present and eternal; if we find nothing of all this, when we are Spectators of, or Conversant with some of the Extravagancies of sensual Appetite; this in its true appearance and deformity, a brutish Indulgence of any kind; when any Instance of Wickedness is acted before us, then surely we are dead to Religion, and can have no Expectation but of our share in the Threatnings it denounces, for a contrary End. Our Religion is just so much as we perceive the Love of God and Man in the bottom of our Hearts, which will have its Efforts if it be there, *viz.* strongly incite to the advancing his Glory, and their Salvation, that they should not even deprive themselves of their part of the so dear Purchase of our Saviour for all the World.

And now if we want Zeal, that is, if we be destitute of the Love of God, at least in the Measure it should be, and have not the force of this Principle to the producing its proper Effects; as thro' or from which we alone can do any Thing that is pleasing to him, or rewardable by him. Indeed one may express the same outward material Acts of Vertue or Religion, on other Motives with other Regards, of secular Advantage, Esteem among Men, and the like; but these, where the Intention was not to him, God no ways accounts of, they have the Recompence in the Design the Person had, who so performed them, even tho' he be defeated thereof. Such empty Proposals we ought well to secure our selves against in all our Actions, or else the losing the reward of them is not the

the only Consequence, or the worst that will follow. If then we want Zeal the inward enforcing of this Principle, *viz.* the Love of God to the discountenancing and repressing of Sin, and what reflects Dishonour upon him.

There are other Considerations, which if duly weighed, should even on the score of delivering our selves, have their efficacy thereto. ——— We may participate and be under the Guilt and severe Account of the Sins of others, tho' thro' no accession of ours to the Commission, tho' we had no Concurrence in them, tho' the shameful Act was or be over before our knowledge thereof; we may nevertheless be under their Guilt, and after some Measure incur the Punishment belonging to them; as either by lessening and mitigating the Offence, not honestly representing it with respect to its Kind, or the Circumstances in which it was done, varnishing it over with counterfeit Colours, or offering Salvoes for it, and so precluding the Compunction that must found and support, and be the first stirring to Repentance; so flattering the unhappy Vassals to Death, so upholding and strengthening them in their Wickedness. Thus we read of the false Prophets among the *Jews*, palliating the many Enormities of the People, or by their evasive Interpretations, even exempting those from the Notion of such, but they were ever involved in the Vengeance denounced against them; and we may justly suppose in an equal Degree, as *he* who is so much Sin's Advocate, to furnish Arguments for it, who perswades concerning it, any Instance thereof, that 'tis but little or none, who justifies it after a certain Manner, cannot be thought, tho' every one has a faithful Monitor in his Breast, that will ever tell him Truth, and advise him right, if duly consulted, whether we call this natural Conscience, or the Grace of the Redeemer placed there again immediately after *Adam's* Sin or Fall; he who extenuates any Fault or Trespas perswading it to be little, tho' every one is blessed with such a Monitor, and must rebel against this when he commits it, he cannot be thought to be much less in the Guilt, than the Actor himself. ——— Again we are chargeable with the Faults of others, if we connive at, if we conceal them, and use not first our selves, and which being ineffectual, procure them the Benefit of all those Methods, that a wise Legislation has appointed to retrieve such Profligates if possible, or set Bounds

to their impious Courses; I say the benefit of those Methods, for tho' it be a most wretched Folly, a stupidity one would believe, a thinking Creature in its formal Being could not arrive at, that any should have less Apprehension, less Sense on their Minds at the notice of God and his Inflictions, when they act or stand guilty of any ill Behaviour, than they have or maintain with regard to Men on either of these Accounts; yet as such is the Case, legal Sufferings with the Shame accompanying them may have their avail, and bring them into a Thought of the long miserable entail of Sin, which they now Experience some part of, and awaken them into proper and due Reflections God-wards, and so the Work however begun, at last may attain and proceed on a right Principle.

Thus we may be obnoxious for other Men's Offences, other Men's Impieties, if we stop not the Process, if we endeavour not to repress them, and reform the vicious Inclination and Temper every way we are able, with every Faculty given us, on every Opportunity put into our Hands, nay even sought after too. Oh then! why should we venture, why should we expose our selves to such large Indictments in another World, and forfeit *our Salvation* at least in Degree, for not promoting *that* of our Brethren, tho' that the means of ours also. Have we not score enough of our own Sins, of our loose Imaginations, of our wandring Thoughts, when we pretend, deluding one another, to imploy these entirely on God, even when we address him for his most important Vouchsafements, for Pardon and Grace; which if not afforded, the one suspended, the other denied, we perish eternally; and yet even then so requesting on these Accounts, put into Competition with him our Nothings, our Mammon, and at least divide our Hearts so. These are repeated at our best times, when we come to atone for our other Trespases, what more we have purely Personal, and our own, the motive from none, the incentive in our selves, we cannot but well perceive and know, *viz.* corrupt Nature as it is in us, if we may so say, mastering the Holy Spirit of God, who can do every thing in us and by us, conquer every Lust, bring forth every Vertue, thro' our willing Obedience; but can attain no effect of this Kind, or which is Moral, in a free Creature without such its *Conformity* with him, *which,*
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alafs, we have been so wanting to afford. Nay notwithstanding we have such a Conqueror with us, but requiring our concurrence for the Effect, by whom we every where might subject corrupt Nature, still resisting it into a gradual Abatement of its Force; yet especially where it is complexionally such, we have commonly fostered it till Habit be with it, and even Habit permitted, more without Apology, in other Respects. And are not these Offences sufficient, so numerous as they are, but we must transferr, and bring those of others into the Account? Let this then have its weight with us, to set our best endeavours against Sin, to its Suppression, to the reclaiming and releasing of the miserable Captives, wherever we meet the walking Phantom, the monstrous Sight.

But there is another thing that deserves our Thoughts, and should as strenuously engage the whole of our Power, and what we possibly can contribute this Way; and that is the Calamities that follow Sin, with their diffusiveness and universal Spread, whereof it is the natural productive Cause, and which one may say it contains in its Womb. Man is the Epitome and Centre of this World, and when he depraved himself thro' Sin, when he admitted Sin into him, it immediately darkned his better Faculties, mightily impaired the native Perspicacity, the *own* Discernment that was given such his Faculties; besides that it deprived him of the *Divine Enlightning* in them, till God thro' his Son bestowed *that* or his Son on them again, but *which* never could be display'd in that Clarity, because of such perverseness of Will, and as among such thick steams of Sense, as before; and it likewise brought an opaque gross Body on his Heavenly, and on his Minde, and changed whatever related to him or was made for him into a like dusky Frame, deriving its poysonous Effect and Influence into those also. The Disorder was such which this brought into nature and the system of Things, that let the Philosophers say what they will, Corruption is at present their inbred Motion, their Tendency is only to Dissolution and a Chaos again: This they would fall into, unless even after a forcible Manner they were preserved by their first Architect, unless *they consisted in him, and were upheld by the Word of his Power, as a surer Authority than theirs* informs us. (Col. 1, 17.) Heb. 1. 44.)

Now if Sin was attended with all this Consequence, if it produced, or was the cause of such direful Effects, even in the perfect state of Things; what can we expect under such its Ruins, when it has got such large Possession of the Minds of Men, captivated their Affections to it, as to the far greater Numbers, and holds them so fast in its alluring Bondage; when 'tis so Reigning and Extensive, has so vanquished Religion, its gentle Calls and Dissuasives within, which are the good Ground for those without to be received into: And when also our Blessed Saviour, as so many among us have hardened themselves against the Effects of his Grace, and dared his Judgments, is so provoked to withdraw his sustaining Might; what can we expect, if *his little Flock, the far smaller Party of good People*, whom he has such regard to, and 'tis *these* that prevail with him to carry on his providential Care, to continue his Supports of ruinous Nature, so are the Profligate and the Wicked indebted to *them*; if *these* did not charitably imploy themselves and the Capacities he has given them, to oppose the over-flowing Deluge of Sin, especially in this great City where all its Arts, all its Mysteries are so well Learnt; and both by wholesom Admonitions and the compulsion of Laws upon them, and their own conformable Examples, something awaken those pityable Miscreants, thro' Shame or Sufferings, to attend the *Divine Whispers* in their Minds, or supposing *these* stifled, to prevent the Contagion on others from them?

If there were not such a Check on the progress of Sin and its fatal Consequences; and such a motive on our gracious Redeemer still to protract his Divine Interposul and his Long-Suffering, this root of Evil, this pregnant Cause even of the physical Kinds thereof, this infecting Malignity far and Wide, having only its original in Man, and deriving from him, would break forth into Plagues and Pestilences, would kindle a Fire from Men's unhallowed Lusts and Passions, hence would the Flames begin, and burn up the Earth with whatever is upon it. As the Prophet tells us, *Wickedness burneth as a Fire*, (Isa. 9, 18.) and St. James expresses this more fully, *the Tongue*, that is the malicious Words it utters, and the principle is the Heart thence those proceed, and such it self is, *the Tongue is a Fire, and setteth on Fire the course of Nature*, (Chap. 3. 6.) but God would then secure his Righteous

teous Ones. This, *viz.* Wickedness or Sin is the Abomination of Desolation, or which maketh desolate.

I am perswaded, I think it capable of Demonstration, that every Affliction we labour under, Famines, Sickneses, Wars 'tis evident, and even which we stile natural Evils, are the genuine Off-spring and Descendants of Sin; and God's Instance at proper Seasons is only Negative, his not Overruling, not hindring the Process, tho' none be sure but must own Miracles of this Kind also; I speak for the most part. But still it is the same thing, as if God inflicted these Judgments, they come or are permitted at the Times, and on the Opportunities that his Wisdom sees fit; only as he declares, that he delights not in our Sufferings, has *no Pleasure in the Death*, however this accepted, of Sinners; such Scenes seem not so chargeable on his positive Act, not so agreeable to his only operative attribute of Goodness, not of a similiary Kind or Nature, like Effects and Cause. But nevertheless when such Calamities are commissioned upon us, we are as much concerned to pray to God in the Exercise of a sincere and earnest Repentance, that he would restrain, that he would bind up the cursed Malignity again, we so endeavouring to remove it from our Hearts, and when that is done, acknowledge it to him, and present and offer him our devoutest Thanks.

Now is not every one obliged, faithfully using the means he has, to keep off such Calamities, or render them more moderate, or procure a more hasty period to them, by removing that whereof these are the Fruits or suppressing its growth, that it bring forth no more? Would one be a Party in bringing on these outside Destructions, on the Bodies of People, on our own or on our selves likewise, so miserably to conclude this temporal Life in the midst of it; and be liable also on this Account to severer Sufferings afterwards? Nay shall we deprive poor thoughtless Offenders, if our Vertues were advanced to the perfect Habit, if these stood at the height, and we needed no farther Progress or Improvement, which alas is not the Case neither? Shall we deprive those of the space of Repentance, while we no ways administer thereto, but permit Sin to its necessary Effects, which it only Produces, which God so disowns, which has been the long Labour of his Love, every way possible with his reasonable

Creatures, to bear down and hinder, and we so stand answerable to Murder too in its highest Instance with respect to their Souls?

Oh let us not so disregard our Brethren, in Nature, comprized also with us in the Ransom of Christ, tho' at present they reject it, Opportunity may bring forth a better Effect, they may possibly be serious and think, and 'tis but that, afterwards: Let us not so disregard them, and their Miseries, which by that means will come on the World, in no small Measure now lying upon it, and is and still must be our Portion with them; but demonstrate our Compassion towards them, which nevertheless is so depreciated, where after such a manner ourselves are concerned, by imploying our best Endeavours in the Station allotted us, and which is no more than the discharging our bounden Duty, and the right Prosecuting our own Interest, to put a stop to this worst, but so prevailing malady of Sin, this fruitful parent of all Evils, to drive it back to its first Fomenter with the Torments attending it, be they his own and his Hell likewise; and retrieve and establish our pure Christianity with the alone true Happiness, of which it is the Ground.

Then would Love diffuse its Blessed Enjoyments, then we should not matter a difference of Opinion, where the common and right Faith is entertained, and where we found the evidences of Probity were. Then would our strong Contentions cease, which plainly argue, while as so maintain'd even by the more Distinguishing and better Sort, free from other Scandal, that Religion among us is no more than a Profession only, not a vital Principle, not a living Dictate of Divine Grace in our Souls. Whom then shall we find to resist and repress the large spread Evil, and be an Obstacle to the fatal Events from it? None but those who especially mind *the inward ground, the Heart*, and Religion and Piety, where these truly and savingly are, *there*. And the more diligent should such be to controul Iniquity and such its fatal Mischiefs, with which it labours to the Birth, and so naturally brings Forth, as the charitable Work more lyes upon them, and can be more effectually acquitted by them. One great Offender reproving another, If we could suppose the Instance, and yet it may be with Respect to different Vices, would signify nothing to the cause of Vertue, and the re-establishing or Ob-
taining

taining of that, seeing Recrimination, so the common Return, so disingenuous, would frustrate the Effect, and rather add a Defence, and give a strengthening to the ill Practice from the Example on the other side. So innocent should those be, so secure from being retorted upon, who stand up against Immorality and Prophaneness, who appear in maintenance of our holy Religion and the Faith thereof.

And indeed referring it to us all, we should be more engag'd in this Work (as declar'd in the first Part of this Discourse) thro' or from our Zeal towards God, than whether for preventing our own Miseries, or the ascertaining and securing our Advantage; viz. to preserve the Honour due to him, that his Word and his Name be not prophaned, that his Statutes he has given us, and his Threatnings he has as graciously added thereto, when Love could not bind us to our Duty, and the Means of our Communion with him, which Love, in its return on our side, would influence Obedience in every thing, would never resist him or rebel against him; but this Love is generally lost, as the alone true Object thereof changed for an Idol, some worldly Vanity and Allurement or other; I say, that his Statutes and his Threatnings should not be contemned and set at nought, that his adorable Majesty be justly acknowledged in the transcendent Attributes or Perfections belonging thereto, in his Benefits to uswards; and that an humble Fear of him, and awful Reverence be ever maintain'd, and as we are able, deriv'd on and into the Spirits of Men. The Demonstration of his Regard and Affection to us, from the Enterprize and Sufferings of our Saviour Christ, should render *our Glorifying him*, and our Concern for *this*, dearer to us than we are to our selves, more the Object of our Desires, than any Advantage of ours, but which cannot be separate from our highest Advantage, however such our Disposition should be.

The Primitive Christians well declaring such their fervent Zeal and Piety for preserving Religion pure, that nothing of what may sometimes be turned into a blaspheming of God be suffered with it, injoin'd certain Penances with the Authority of our Saviour's Institution as to the main, on profligate Offenders in their several Degrees, either to be undergone with Reproof and Exhortation in the Places of their joint and publick Worship; or the Parties to be excluded from that Privilege.

lege. And these, 1st, Reprehension or Admonition, could not but such have more Force upon them, from the Solemnity every way, as perform'd in God's more especial *Presence* with his faithful People, communicating in his Service, participating of his Blessings thereupon; and by one called and consecrated of God to that Office, and so representatively and to the more exciting of a pious Dread, speaking from him. Adding to which, the Shame, the Confusion, that an Assembly of devout Persons, tho' ever compassionating them, and praying for them, as the manner was, must raise in them; and the Efficacy this also must have, even with regard to the natural workings of our Thoughts and Mind, to their more heightned Compunction and Repentance. But then which we cannot believe, as to the whole so serious acting, and in answer to such united Prayers, a freer Dispensation of Grace concurring, the holy Spirit impressing on all this. Whence Reproofs and Advices thus given, this way, have the Advantage of all others, and may be concluded of most avail to the reclaiming of Offenders, to the begetting in them a true Penitence, and an earnest Purpose of a contrary and new Life. And the excluding the more Obstinate, from their both religious Meetings and their ordinary Converse, as this not only brought Shame, the highest Shame, but Sufferings too in many respects, they becoming thus desolate Wanderers, and like Persons of old, separate for Leprosy, this often was as operative to the fore-mention'd End.

But other Means are requisite, and other Hands to engage in the Service of Vertue, to repulse Vice, and if not change and recover its unhappy Votaries, drive it into its Obscurity, that it infect not the less constant, that it offend not the more confirmed; Fellow-helpers are needed to discharge the so incumbent Duty on all. And great Encouragement is given by our excellent Sovereign to the Discharge. She is not only eminently exemplary in her own personal Vertue and Piety (and without this first, none will espouse that Interest abroad) but she affords her Royal Authority in every thing, to propagate such her own Habit in others, viz. Vertue and Piety, and render these Reputable and National, as much as she can, readily concurring with every Design to this Purpose, and contributing the Aids of her high Station to the blessed Event, that her People, every one of them, may communicate with
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her in the *Happiness*, that only results from, that is the alone Product of a religious Course, *which* she so experiences in her own Breast; and ensure God's Blessings of every sort upon us all, as well inward as outward, both those ascribable to his Grace and his Providence. She has issu'd forth her Royal Proclamations in this Cause of God, and it would be (to conclude with a fresh Argument) an high Disobedience, may I not call it a Breach of Allegiance to her derivative Majesty, as well as to his the Supreme, not to comply therewith the utmost we are able, using the more Gospel-Methods first, that allows nothing of outward Force, that is wholly a Dispensation of Love, and proceeds by insinuating into the Heart, and inward Motive on the Principle it self, where the Change must be made, or nothing is done, *viz. gently reprobend, admonish, advise.* But those scandalous and harden'd, that are Proof against *these*, who stand in Defiance of all Sovereignty of Heaven and Earth, who, in the Expression of an Heathen Prince, *will not do the Law of God, and the Law of the King*, (Ezra 7. 27.) those are to be brought to the Shame and the Punishment, which the Laws of each, speaking with respect to our Legislature, have enacted or ordained. And this is the last, and certainly a main restraining of Sin, and absolutely necessary in the Sense and Example of all Mankind, who have formed themselves into Civil Communities for this purpose. A State of Nature, as some speak, where that is left to its self, where its Corruptions are let loose, and without Confinement, affords us the most miserable Idea that can be, even indeed that of Hell. And if Laws so generally be thought of such Expediency to be made, not to fetch the Institution from God and the Mosaic Code, then questionless none can Object against the bringing and applying them to their design'd Use, and Men religiously joyning together for this Intent. And if any do so Object, as to the ground of which I shall offer no Conjectures, I am apt to believe, if they be indued with any competency of Thought or Reason, that will contradict them in their own Breasts. If there should possibly be Faults in the Management, that will not be allowed with wise Men to a disapproval of what is justly founded, and that has its Testimonial in its due and discreet Conduct; nor can it sure be blame-worthy, or deserve the Account of insignificant, or of Pharisaical pretending to extraordinary Sanctity above others,

to discharge that by mutual Endeavours or Societies, which is every one's Obligation singly to perform, and which calls for such mutual and united Endeavours; Vice is manifold, and there are numerous Retainers to every several Species of it. That therefore we may perform our whole Christian Duty, what in any regard lies on us, and will be required at the last Day from us, let me shut up the whole in the Apostle's Words and Prayer.

Heb. 13. 20, 21. *Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, thro' Jesus Christ; to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.
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